THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON

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A TYPICAL AMERICAN

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An exhibition of the collected works of a painter or a sculptor is generally recognised as a perilous ordeal for his reputation; faults which pass unnoticed in an isolated composition force themselves upon the attention, again and again, in a collection. An author runs the same risk when he publishes, somewhat late in life, a series of volumes already apparently classical, representing the whole of his life-work.

* From 'Questions Américaines,' Paris: Hachette, 1901, reprinted from the 'Revue des Deux Mondes' (June 1901). Works newly arranged, 7 vols., Boston: — 'Cheerful Yesterdays,' 'Contemporaries,' 'Army Life in a Black Regiment,' 'Women and the Alphabet,' 'Studies in Romance,' 'Outdoor Studies and Poems,' 'Studies in History and Letters.'

Generally he makes a mistake in thus anticipating the judgment of posterity, which knows very well, without his assistance, what should in the end be chosen to survive or consigned to oblivion. Nevertheless our thanks for this act of courage are due to him who was the Rev. T. W. Higginson before he became colonel, historian, reformer, essayist, and, above all, the typical embodiment of a country, a social class, and a character, not to be found elsewhere. The career of the American citizen, containing in itself alone several stages in man's history, has been closely concerned with all the events and main currents of the century. Mr Higginson preached and he went to war, he threw himself into the discussion of social questions, he had a hand in politics, and he has been a teacher and a reformer. The rights of women have not had a stauncher champion; many problems, the importance of which is only just beginning to dawn upon us, were long ago discussed by him in fugitive articles contributed to

certain magazines at various crises of the hour; and these articles collected together to-day, after the fight has been fought and the victory gained, are of the greatest worth. In his miscellaneous writings, no matter how heterogeneous the subjects, the same general point of view is found, the same fixity of aim, the same belief in final success, irrespective of apparent defeat. An English traveller was surprised to see the Americans celebrate the battle of Bunker Hill as though it were a victory. Doubtless history credited it to George the Third, but the Americans celebrate the fact of standing there upon their own ground, and of having there fired their first cartridges. In the same way the reformer looks upon obstacles as steps in the direction of progress. Such defeats compel a patient waiting for the victory which always follows. So Mr Higginson thought and taught, and his brave optimism certainly tended to make him sympathetic, even had he lacked other qualities. But he is to be admired for the warmth

of his personal impressions, and his graceful and rapid style, formed, almost too exclusively, upon the study of *belles lettres.*

I had the good fortune to meet at Boston and Cambridge, 1893-1897, the survivors of that group of noted men to which Emerson and Hawthorne, Longfellow and Lowell belonged. The chief figures had gone, but Oliver Wendell Holmes and Colonel Higginson remained.

The first, a brilliant talker and a delicate humorist, whom M. Forgues introduced, forty years ago, to the readers of the 'Revue des Deux Mondes,' as a rival of Sterne and Xavier de Maistre, in speaking of his most celebrated work, 'The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table,' was of advanced age and very near his end.* 'The Little Doctor' was pointed out as an extremely precious relic by the men and women devotees (especially the latter) who worshipped at his shrine; or, in other words, crowded his admirable

* Dr Holmes died in 1894.

library. It felt like taking part in the raising of a spirit to be in his presence; the trembling laugh, the feeble voice, his good sayings 'put under glass' at once, all seemed as though they came from the other side of the grave. So Déjazet represented 'Monsieur Garat' at an age which permitted but the shadow of the former self. But with Dr Holmes, as with Déjazet, the mind still scintillated, and I was glad to have seen the novelist-theologian, the physiological poet, the delightful and inexhaustible talker. No function was held in Boston without Dr Holmes; his presence was demanded at every public gathering and banquet; he had supremely the gift of ready speech, brilliant and easy. For some years now the honours which he held have devolved upon Colonel Higginson, who has remained to fulfil the *rôle* of Master of Ceremonies in academic circles and towards distinguished strangers, his fine bearing and splendid presence aiding him perfectly. There is a kind of coquetry, on his part, in the way

he frankly owns the year of his birth, 1823. Look at him under three different aspects in the frontispieces of the three principal volumes of his complete works: first, with beardless face, and long abundant hair, looking like George Sand in her youthful days, a young man of singular beauty; then, in the uniform of a colonel, with martial air and full beard; lastly, as he is today, erect and thin, with a decoration in his buttonhole, probably the one which in this country of equality attests the blue blood of an American of the colonial days, eye-glass in hand, observing men and things with a somewhat haughty dignity. It is a pity that he is not also represented in the fantastic ecclesiastical dress which he wore at the time of his first sermon at Newburyport: a grey overcoat, quite new-fashioned, with cap to match, edged with fur. Someone pointed out to him that it was not a clerical dress, and he took steps to effect a compromise. 'Let it alone,' said his mother, who, like her son, had plenty of humour;

'if the dress does not please, they will pardon still less the wearer of it.'

A propos of dress, the remembrance of Thomas Wentworth Higginson is clearly united in my mind with that of a *fête*, eminently aristocratic, though given upon the anniversary of the battles of Lexington and Concord, the first struggles of the American Revolution.

This was held at Craigie House, the most celebrated residence in Cambridge, for it had been used as his headquarters by Washington during the winter of 1775-6, and later it had been the habitation of Longfellow. Reminiscences of this poet seemed always to hover there, as though it were a shrine. The fine, white, neat building, with its pilasters and balustrades, was resplendent with lights, and Miss Alice Longfellow, who looked, in her powder, like a great lady of the eighteenth century, opened her rooms to a crowd of merry children and young people, whose historical costumes recalled the memory of

another fancy-dress ball given previously in the same house, by General and Mrs Washington, to celebrate the anniversary of their marriage. Below the fine portraits of these two ancestors stood their representatives, the young Danas, Longfellow's grandchildren, reflecting to the minutest details the figures of the hosts of time past. One by one the guests came before them and bowed low, presented, in sonorous accents, by a young counterpart of Edmund Randolph of Virginia, grand master of the ceremonies of that old-time ball. All who had been or who could have been invited to that same ball, La Fayette and Rochambeau included, were represented, and these two last did not fail to make their salute in the French fashion, hand upon heart. General Greene, General Lincoln, John Hancock, Rufus Bigelow, Edmund Trowbridge, and others, jostled against the oldest heroes of the colonial days, the grave Governor Winthrop, Sir Harry Vane, of tragic memory, William Penn, and many

others; pilgrim fathers, puritans and quakers, not to mention all kinds of imaginary personages, who lent a fanciful note to this heterogeneous assembly. America claims to possess equally with England the domain of Shakespeare. A Queen Mab of six years' old, wand in hand, was there; Romeo's page-boy, and other creations of the fancy, who soon joined hands in a modern valse with the sons and daughters of liberty, some of them descended, more or less directly, from the characters whose costumes they wore. I remember especially one dark girl, with pearls in her black hair, charming in the garb of light white silk, which fastened almost under her arms, whom Colonel Higginson introduced to me as Lady Wentworth, wife of Sir John Wentworth, Governor of New Hampshire and of New Scotland.

'She is my daughter,' he added, 'in the very same dress that her great-grandmother wore, which we have carefully treasured.'

And he began to talk to me of a time

when certain Europeans, who do not see anything in the American nation beyond a crowd of adventurers, of skilful mechanics, and of rough workmen, had great need of being better informed, a time which provided Colonel Higginson with the most delightful pages of his 'Cheerful Yesterdays.'

In the veins of this charming girl, of whom he became the happy father in his green old age, and who was the subject of his dainty verses 'Six and Sixty Years,' courses the blood of the Wentworths, who gave three vice-regal governors to America, and who were accused by the spiteful tongues of Portsmouth of designating, in a retrospective sense, Queen Elizabeth as Cousin Betsy Tudor. Her grandmother was that dauntless lover Anne Appleton, who, in spite of the difficulties that were raised between the two nations because of war, and in spite of domestic feud which well-nigh equalled that between the Montagues and the Capulets, married

an English officer, Captain Storrow, a prisoner at Portsmouth, at the beginning of the Revolution. Later, after a series of strange vicissitudes, their orphan daughter married a rich shipowner, Higginson, whose adopted child she had at first been. Who can say after this that America is not the land of romance?

Why not read more of the history of the United States? It is short, but nevertheless it is not confined to one revolution and to one civil war. Colonel Higginson has demonstrated this to us better than anyone else in an excellent book dedicated to young people, the sale of which has already reached two hundred thousand copies, and a translation of which has been for some time within reach of the French people.

The principal character in the midst of the juvenile party celebrating national glories was this writer, a patriot through and through. The smallest children present were greeted by him in a fatherly way, and even

this does not sufficiently express his manner: perhaps only a mother can caress children, and speak of them and to them as did Mr Higginson.

Our talk was an intermingling of truth and fantasy, according as we passed from reminiscences of Washington and of Longfellow to reflections upon the guests assembled together under their roof, a confused babel of music and gay chatter all round us. All the America of times past, embodied in youthful forms, paced the long gallery, danced in the salons, and even invaded the study; and yet this was no profanation of the memory of the poet who loved the lilacs, who sanctified 'The Children's Hour,' who saw the beauty of simple things, and who sang for everyone. I thought of the unstinted hospitality he always dispensed, and of that saying of his worthy daughter, 'Poetry with him was not a matter of the intellect: it was the blossoming of his inner life. To love, to help, to welcome. . . .'

Even noisy and exuberant pleasure

did not dismay him, and he was as thoroughly used to the invasion of his sanctuary by his Cambridge worshippers as was Emerson by his Concord admirers. The position of 'a representative man' is no sinecure in the United States, as the author of 'Evangeline' found. Foreigners went to him directly they landed. He genially styled himself their 'American uncle,' and, standing before his marble bust—his fine Olympian face softened by gentle human feelings—I, the latest to come, return thanks in the name of all those intruders from beyond the seas who have preceded me. Books which ranged everywhere, and the high desk at which he wrote standing, spoke of his hard-working presence to these light-hearted masked children, his familiar friends and confidants. One of them unceremoniously occupied the old chair, fashioned out of the chestnut that sheltered a forge; that forge which Longfellow, in 'The Village Blacksmith,' has made the symbol of a life in which, without

pause, without rest, we forge our destinies.

'The nurse who brought me up,' said Colonel Higginson to me, 'was Rowena Pratt, the wife of the blacksmith.'

The next moment we were carried away from this simple reality into the midst of the Declaration of Independence, the noble lady of the colonial days having invited the young people of her time, Shakespearean characters included, to the distribution of what we call the properties of the cotillon, made up of tiny flags and other patriotic devices.

It was in this manner that I became actively acquainted with the first pages of Colonel Higginson's 'Cheerful Yesterdays.'*

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* Thus entitled after Wordsworth :—

'A man he seemed of cheerful yesterdays
And confident to-morrows.'

I

It is not always unwarrantable to speak of oneself when it serves solely as an excuse for speaking principally of others.

During his long life, Wentworth Higginson has been associated with every notable movement in America. Above all, he has spent much of his time at Cambridge, and has made it known to many people who imagined that all American towns were built more or less after the pattern of Chicago. Together with the late Dr Holmes and Professor Norton, who now represent the highest culture, Colonel Higginson has a right to the title of 'A Child of the College.' He was born at Cambridge, to which place his father had retired, ruined by the embargo of Jefferson, that disastrous sequel to the difficult situa-

tion into which the shipping and the commerce of the United States had been placed by the war between France and England. The wealthy Boston merchant, widely known for his bountiful philanthropy, led a simple, economical life at Harvard, for he had ten children to provide for. In these modest circumstances he still kept the friends of his more prosperous days, and Mrs Higginson continued to gather round her a circle of kindred spirits, the real founders of American literature.

The university town of Cambridge, which to-day numbers over 70,000 inhabitants, then had not as many as 3000, but it was already the centre of thought and learning. With good reason, Higginson considers it a special favour of providence that he is able to associate his earliest recollections with a small and therefore characteristic place. A writer has not only to study men in order to develop himself as he would wish, but he should watch Nature, and breathe

the atmosphere of books. Now men are interesting, and Nature is beautiful at Cambridge; these, and the library which had to go into so little compass, cast their magic spell over the observant child, who, even whilst at play, listened to the reading of good books.

Brought up by a mother, an aunt, and by very clever sisters, the young Wentworth grew up unconscious of the intellectual drawbacks which have weighed upon women for so long, until one day a certain very learned lady related in his presence the struggles against convention and public opinion which the effort to obtain a man's education had cost her. Her spirit rebelled against what, to her, seemed so cruel an injustice, and even before the birth of feminism, this child of fifteen attached himself enthusiastically to the cause.

He passed from his preparatory school to one governed by an English schoolmaster, who extolled physical exercises and corporal punishment

above everything else. The master never let go a cane which fell very freely upon the back of his scholars. If his scholars left him thoroughly saturated with Greek and Latin, they were at the same time somewhat bruised with blows. This hard discipline explains why Wentworth Higginson has been throughout his life the pronounced partisan of mixed education and gentler methods. Although he had not the good fortune to have as his classmates the young girls of his generation, he fell in love whilst very young, as did all his companions, writing letters which never went, and poems which were never shown; the jealous slave of some beauty, whose real name he dared not pronounce, limiting himself to the designation of her by some conventional pseudonym when she was the subject of long discussions. His romantic inclinations in no way interfered with his activity as a boy. He was fond of natural history, and walked many miles to find a plant or

a beetle. This taste is very conspicuous in his 'Outdoor Studies,' especially in the delightful 'Procession of the Flowers.'

The history of their country was always present in the minds of the students of Cambridge. Even the stones and trees of the town recalled to them the heroic times of the Independence. Higginson was born in 'The Professor's Row,' the street down which the provincial troops marched to the battle of June 17th, 1775, after halting for prayer before the famous 'Gambrel-Roofed House,' where Dr O. Wendell Holmes, the descendant of a line of famous ministers, was born. His own house contained portraits of his ancestors in their wigs; but the future students of Harvard would the rather resort to the old graveyard, to pay homage to precious traditions: the Latin epitaphs, the eloquent cracks of some of the tombstones from which the lead fillings had been torn to be made into bullets; to the old powder-works of

the Revolution, and to the ruins of the forts, where, lying down among the grass, they repulsed in imagination the attacks of the English. And the University, already 200 years old, a world in itself, was the embodiment of their noblest dreams. How full of interest were the College ceremonies!

The ceremony which is called the 'Commencement,' when the degrees are bestowed, was not only for the College, but was a public holiday throughout Massachusetts. Crowds came from far and near to the fair and races, the Boston banks were closed on that day, and wealthy people came in their carriages to stop at least twenty-four hours at Cambridge.

At the last census there were three thousand students at the University; when Higginson entered it at the early age of fourteen, there were only 305. It is a very general mistake to suppose that the rules were stricter then than now. Quite the contrary. The temperance societies

had not then produced any effect, and it was not an uncommon thing to find a drunken student in the streets on certain holidays, a thing unknown nowadays. With regard to the instruction, the entrance examination was less difficult than it is now, but it contained several parts which have ceased to be compulsory. Various branches of study were less optional, and there were eminent professors; amongst others E. T. Channing, who moulded the finest minds of the time, such as Emerson, Lowell, Peabody, Holmes, Sumner, Phillips, Thoreau and Norton, to mention only those known in France.

Higginson left the University in 1841, meaning, first of all, to give up his time to study, then to go in for the law, but at eighteen a man often changes his plans, and an insatiable eagerness for knowledge and action urged him in the most different directions; first towards mathematics, later towards philology (he knew superficially nearly every language enough

to be able to read them), soon towards natural history (he possessed a smattering of the philosophy of Locke, and of French eclecticism). He loved to write and to debate, and poetry was his passion. Notwithstanding a basis of instinctive democratic feeling, the Cambridge of those days was very far from being a land of equality. The social status of everyone there was, on the contrary, sharply defined and scrupulously respected. Nevertheless, in more than one of the professors' households, some poor country lad worked with his hands and repaired the roads to pay for his teaching; several of these rustics attained high positions in due course, and their descendants are to-day professors of the University, ranking high among Cambridge society. Higginson noted it with pleasure. Was it their example? But, although possessed of so many acquirements, at least in embryo, he had wished for some years to become a simple workman, in order to go through

everything, try everything, and, above all, to learn how to enter into sympathy with all. One of his brothers, who, as an engineer, was constructing a railway, realised this desire by taking him on in his gang at a dollar a day, and he can still vividly remember the joy he experienced in his exertions and efforts in the woods where they lacked skilled labourers.

How very much he must have enjoyed the contrast of re-entering soon after the choicest circle of Cambridge society, where the influence of the transcendental movement inaugurated by Emerson was making itself vaguely felt; when the conversational classes of that genial blue-stocking, Margaret Fuller, were bearing fruit; when, in short, the desire for something new, no matter how far-fetched, was manifesting itself, and being followed in everything. The young people of both sexes were divided into groups of brothers and sisters round two affianced people not at all in a hurry to be united by the commonplace

bond of matrimony. They were James Lowell, who had begun his literary career, and the ethereal Maria White, his betrothed, the King and Queen, as they were called. This society, which encouraged close, platonic intimacies, formed a kind of Decameron; every emotion was exaggerated; the atmosphere was that of a hothouse, highly scented, but, at the same time, the most generous enthusiasm for the state was combined with it. It was the paradise of youth, such as the seventeenth century tried to realise at the Hotel Rambouillet, had not the breezes of modern socialism fanned across it all.

Higginson fell under the remote influence of Lamennais and of George Sand, as well as that of the thinker who was nearer to him—viz. Emerson. Emerson was at that time writing to Carlyle:—'We are all a little infatuated by innumerable plans for social reform; there is not a single person who can read that does not carry

some one or other about with him in his waistcoat pocket.'

About 1843, two years before the celebrated experiments of the recluse Thoreau, Higginson tried to cultivate an orchard with his own hands. It was the fashion to turn to Nature. The young man was successively gardener, usher, or tutor, whilst all the time pondering and reading. At the house of his cousin, Mr Perkins of Brookline, who had entrusted the education of his children to him, he met such men as Prescott the historian, and the great orator Daniel Webster. He was in touch at the same time with the Communistic Settlement of Brook Farm, where the fanciful reformers, so graphically described by Hawthorne in his 'Blithedale Romance,' ushered in a new era with all the eccentricities of idealists, minus the certain laxities which elsewhere accompanied the movement, and with that almost savage austerity which is nearly always inseparable from the Anglo-Saxon race during

periods of intellectual energy. Most of them haunted the Boston library, founded by Miss Elizabeth Peabody, of whom one of her friends well said that she was always busy trying to satisfy some need of other people's which she had previously created. Nervous and restless, she found her true vocation in dedicating herself to children, and to the intelligent adaptation of the Froebel method. Her little foreign library, which she set up on the space once occupied by her father, Dr Peabody's, homœopathic dispensary, was certainly one of the educational influences of Boston. Wentworth Higginson steeped himself there in Jouffroy and in Cousin, and drank in the 'Paroles d'un Croyant,' or the 'Livre du peuple,' then he let himself be carried away towards German thought by Jean Paul and Heine. All these influences and many besides found their way into his writings, sometimes at the expense of originality. He should have applied to himself the aphorism of his

teacher, Theodore Parker, which he has transcribed in the midst of far too many quotations: — 'Knowledge is not accumulation but assimilation. . . . All the science in the world is worth nothing if it destroy the quality of thought.'

Too much ill-digested reading is evident among many highly cultivated Americans. Wentworth Higginson endeavoured to do away with night, in order to read the more, but sleep ended by being the stronger.

Sometimes all these youthful Utopians gathered at the house of one of their number (an enthusiastic follower of Fourier), who had painted above his door a golden sun inscribed 'Universal unity.' Unfortunately another inscription, painted below in black and white, read, 'Please wipe your feet.'

How did the idea of entering the ecclesiastical state come into Higginson's mind in the midst of this kind of life? It is difficult to say, for

a great portion of the so-called liberal ministry has become secularised since then. He had been won over to the preaching of Freeman Clarke by his *fiancée*, a charming Unitarian; but his personal inclination led him still more powerfully towards Theodore Parker, of whom he gave a fine sketch in his 'Contemporaries.' Parker was a Lexington farmer, who overworked himself with manual labour, in order to attain the chance of overworking himself intellectually; he died worn out at fifty, but his powerful preaching, the good influence that radiated from him, roused not merely thousands of intellects, but thousands of hearts, for, beyond all else, he was a man who loved. His eloquence, his learning, everything beside this was of but secondary importance. He was the refuge of distressed emigrants and pursued slaves, of wandering minds, and unhappy women. No one, however wretched, went away from him unaided. Sorrowing crowds found in

him a friend. No matter how important his work, he was lavishly generous with his time, his counsel, and his money, and the benefit of his experience. These were always at the disposal of those who, whether belonging to his parish or not, called upon him ceaselessly, even from far distant places, because he was the only preacher who had reached their hearts. He mowed down evil with all his might, as at one time he had mowed down grass. Quite the opposite of Emerson, that entirely original seeker, who, notwithstanding, co-operated in the same work, he stored up general knowledge in order to give it out again in a popular form to the masses.

Of him it could be said as of Luther—that other brave plebeian soul—that he knew just how to gauge his audience, to be colloquial with the people, and more imperious with kings even than they were themselves. The vigorous branches of his rugged genius plunged deep into the heart of the national

life. Extraordinary power of working became second nature with him; he knew nothing about that wise passivity enjoined by the poet. He killed himself and killed many of his disciples too, who wished at least to try to accomplish what Parker had achieved. At the sound of his voice Wentworth Higginson felt the soul of one of his ancestors tremble in his—the Reverend Francis Higginson, who in 1629 had landed in the harbour of Salem, with a load of emigrants destined for the colony of Massachusetts. This ancestor was nothing of a fanatic. History has immortalised the words he uttered on leaving England:—

'We will not say, as the Separatists said, "Farewell, Rome! Farewell, Babylon!" But we will say: "Farewell, dear England! farewell, the Christian Church in England, and all the Christian friends there!"'

But the Puritan minister could pride himself on a little more dogmatism than his grandson, the author of the essay on 'The Sympathy of Religions,'

in which we see him admit without debate, all forms of 'the magnificent liturgy of the human race.' Narrow exclusiveness was in the eyes of Wentworth Higginson the unpardonable sin.

Furthermore, his state of mind could not astonish the Dean of the Harvard Theological Faculty, the Rev. Palfrey, who summed up his class at that period in the three words, mystics, sceptics, and dyspeptics; meaning that all the students were launched more or less upon the waves of that free thought, the gospel of Emerson and of Parker, which was so eager to remove the landmarks of the past. Higginson, at any rate was not one of the dyspeptics, his extreme moderation saved him from that. He had taken a vow of poverty, living on bread and milk, so that he could buy more books. But what were those books? Fourier, Auguste Comte, Strauss's 'Life of Jesus,' and many others. It is not wonderful that even the most advanced thinkers amongst the Unitarians

should suspect their pastor of heresy. He was as completely opposed to the established order of things as was even the radical Thoreau himself, and totally at variance with the greater number of the clergy, who refused to concern themselves with the anti-slavery movement.

II

THIS movement had been organised by Garrison, that man of iron, to whose judgment and moral strength Lincoln attributed the chief place of honour in carrying out the revolution. It was of Garrison that Emerson was thinking when he said: 'What a forest of victorious laurels should we carry, with the tears of all humanity, to those who stood firm against the opinion of their contemporaries!'

Indeed, for the journalist-orator Garrison, for the eloquent lawyer Wendell Phillips, for the pioneers who sacrificed with them their fortunes and their social position, the least peril they ran was that of being assaulted by the populace, threatened with death, or dragged through the streets of Boston at the end of ropes; there were more cruel trials to be faced in the

blame of many honoured Conservatives, relatives and friends of former days. The whole of Harvard University and a large portion of the best society of Boston declared against abolition; and, on the other side, amongst those who upheld it were several similar to the one whom Theodore Parker was reduced to describe as 'A scamp, but he loved liberty.'

In such company a young minister was bound to compromise himself. Higginson did not mind; the indignation he felt at all tyranny welled up within him. Had not his grandfather, the Rev. John Higginson of Salem, been the first to support, as far back as the year 1700, Judge Sewall's protestation in favour of 'Joseph sold by his brethren'? As this good man had left, without regret, a benefice in England, at the dictates of conscience, so he preferred to renounce preaching rather than disguise his opinions. He gained the respect of his neighbour Whittier, the virtuous Quaker and poet of the people; the sympathies of the younger

members of his congregation, and also of several women who took a lively part in the crusade against slavery. Long before the publication of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' Lydia Maria Child had, pen in hand, sturdily defended that class of 'Americans called Africans.' There were others too, Mrs Chapman, Abby Foster, etc., women highly cultivated and gently bred, who braved the opinion of the world for the love of justice.

Strengthened by the approval of those whom he held to be in the right, Higginson gave himself heart and soul to the often fierce conflicts which raged round Boston at the time when an inexorable law demanded the restitution of the escaped slaves, who came to take shelter there in large numbers.

In the Convention held the previous year, Garrison had defied the entire South to get these poor creatures back, and now they were obliged to flee further north towards Canada. A Watch Committee controlled by Garrison protected them; more than once

they went so far as to rescue arrested slaves from prison and carry them off from the court. Higginson has pointed out the strange uneasiness experienced by the members of this Committee, when they found themselves in opposition to established institutions, and obliged to assume an attitude of conspiracy. He relates how they were obliged from the first to upset order and to resist law, police, and military, who were all on the wrong side, and who did most detestable actions under cover of their so-called duty. The boxing lessons once taken by the reverend gentleman now came in useful. Behind prison bars, where he passed a few days, Higginson comforted himself by repeating the words of Lamennais, 'Something is always wanting in the finest life that does not end on the battle-field, upon a scaffold, or in a prison.' Higginson was released even before Theodore Parker had an occasion of delivering the speech that he had prepared for his defence.

Worcester, Higginson's second parish, had become a centre of the abolitionist propaganda. His free church rendered great service to the cause; the minister's house often concealed hunted slaves, and amongst them was a young coloured girl, who might have been taken for a pretty brunette rather than for a mulatto, and whose children were perfectly white. Mother and children reached Worcester with the help of the Boston Anti-Slavery Society. She was placed under the protection, for the journey, of a merchant belonging to the place, who was strongly opposed to abolition, and who had no idea that he was violating the law in escorting her. This fugitive slave stayed near Higginson all the winter; hers was a peculiarly interesting case. She was the daughter of her old master; and his half-brother, from whom she had escaped with great difficulty, was the father of her children. She had gentle manners and a modest bearing, and married later a shopkeeper in the suburbs of Boston. She very soon

became absorbed into the white population.

The features recorded by Higginson to prove the immorality and cruelty of slavery are never extreme examples of tragedy, and for this reason are all the more impressive. He recalls the fact that when he visited relatives in the South, many slaves were humanely treated; but he quotes the words of a negro who seemed happy on the whole with his masters: 'All the same, it is good to be able to breathe freely!' And, again, the story of the little girl in the red frock, bought in the market at St Louis by a planter, who chose her as he would a skein of thread. The merchant said with a facetious air, 'Undress her and look at her yourself. I have no secrets from my customers.' And the honest planter, who had come on a harmless errand for his wife, tried to comfort the unfortunate child by saying, 'You would very much like to come with me, would you not?' To which she replied in tears: 'I want to stay with mamma'; a claim both use-

less and unreasonable. The simplicity and the artlessness evident throughout the whole transaction, impress the feelings with horror. Not even 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' contains anything more touching.

III

If Higginson's sacred calling as a minister was not exactly what we understand by the word, he must, however, be greeted as a zealous missionary. He worked without cessation for the Emigrants' Aid Society, and persevered in colonising Kansas State in spite of the 'Border Ruffians.' This was the name given to those slavery advocates on the other side of the Missouri, who tried to hinder the establishment of the right to liberty attempted in Kansas on vast tracts of unoccupied land; they laboured hard on their side, though quite unlawfully, to introduce slavery. The quarrel soon became deadly; the Yankees assiduously carried on the work of relieving the first emigrants from Massachusetts. This was the prelude to the great war, a kind of general rehearsal of the

forthcoming drama. Higginson went out to Kansas, in September 1856, as agent for the National Committee, and his experiences then were decidedly rough. He was outside the pale of human law, in the midst of a guerilla warfare, marked out as a dangerous person, and threatened on all hands. Every passing traveller was summoned to vote for the Missouri party, and the demand was made in a tone as menacing as though purse or life were being asked for. The slave-holding planters obtained fraudulently, by every possible means, an overwhelming majority. Blood was shed in the streets of Leavenworth, where Higginson went to spread the good cause.

During his stay in Kansas, he met the famous John Brown, who had been preparing his rebellion since 1852. This Virginian farmer conceived the idea of raising an army of escaped and freed slaves. Higginson draws the portrait of that undaunted figure, thin, and consumed as by an inner fire; com-

parable only to one of Walter Scott's covenanters. Fanatic though Brown was, his language was restrained; there was nothing of the boor about him; he had that air of distinction which comes from intensely religious feeling. He submitted his men to severe discipline. Devoid of personal ambition himself, he was, nevertheless, possessed by one fixed idea; he believed that the Alleghany mountains had been made from the creation on purpose to serve as a fortress for runaway slaves. He knew those mountains well, as he was once a surveyor, and he knew just the position where a hundred men could keep a thousand at bay. He did not design, at that time, anything beyond going into Virginia, with several comrades, and uniting the slaves in goodwill towards each other, and then allowing himself to be guided by events; that would satisfy such men as Theodore Parker, Dr Howe, etc., who supported him by every means in their power, procuring him money and arms. It is hardly necessary to say

that they had no idea their *protégé* would end in defying the United States Government by seizing an arsenal in order to give arms to the slaves who responded to his appeal. At the head of twenty-two brave fellows, he seized the town of Harper's Ferry, October 16th, 1859, and with these he defended the arsenal against the troops sent to get it back from him: first 1500 of the militia, then a detachment of the States-marines, until all the besieged were either dead or wounded. The undaunted leader held with one hand the pulse of one of his dying sons, and with the other his rifle, whilst still attending to his command. He fell riddled with wounds. A Virginian Court of Justice sentenced him to be hung, and he was executed at Charlestown, December 2, 1859.

According to the different points of view of the opposing parties, John Brown's action was considered either criminal or sublime. In the North he is spoken of with almost religious veneration as a martyr; in the South

he is looked upon as a vagabond or a madman. The account which Higginson entitled 'A Visit to John Brown's Household in 1859' may help to solve the question. He never wrote anything more vigorous, simple and touching than those glowing and thrilling pages extracted from his journal.

About a month before Brown's execution, he visited the family of the man whom he called his friend. In the same mountains where Washington intended to shelter the American army in case of repulse, a little wooden house stood in the middle of a clearing; it was protected by a palisade of stumps of trees, with formidable roots. It was a poor dwelling, without any beauty other than that of the surrounding country. It had one single ornament, as dismal as it was strange—an old mossy tombstone, not laid flat in order to mark a grave, but leant up against the house. This stone was engraved with the name of Captain John Brown, killed in the Revolution, nearly eighty-

three years before. It had been brought there by the grandson of this patriot, and another name had been engraved upon it later, that of Frederick, one of his sons, 'murdered at Osawatomie for his adherence to the cause of freedom.'

No oath, said the narrator, was ever sworn over this stone, but morning and noon the boys going to work in the fields passed and understood the silent appeal. So when the father summoned them to join him at Harper's Ferry they never hesitated, although one of them had just married.

The place is wild, cold, and desolate; from the first of November the ground is covered with snow, which does not really melt before the middle of May. The farm produces very little, only enough to provide bread, some mutton, and a few potatoes for the family. They sell nothing beyond a few fleeces left over after spinning the wool for clothing so many people there. Why did John Brown choose such a place? 'For adherence to the cause of free-

dom.' He foresaw the inevitable struggle, and he went into Kansas to prepare for it. But where did he get his men? His own sons were the first, all of whom he had brought up as soldiers. By patient search he found others; slaves animated by the desire of liberating a wife or children left behind them in slavery.

It is a striking setting: our hearts are moved, as was his, on the threshold of this door which Wentworth Higginson opens for us. What did he say to those people who would hardly believe the disaster announced to them, so great was their confidence in the justice of the cause they served? He was answered by the mother, a courageous and patient creature, by whom Brown had had thirteen children; he had had seven previously by another wife; his daughters-in-law surrounded him. One only had lacked courage, and had kept back her husband from the call; the others were widows.

'My husband,' said Mrs Brown, 'always believed he was an instrument

in the hands of Providence; and I believe it too.' She was acquainted with the plot, which for over twenty years had been the object of all his thoughts and prayers. She herself had prayed much, pleading that he might be killed rather than fall into the hands of the slave-holders; but, finely added the humble wife, 'I could not regret it now, in view of the noble words of freedom which it had been his privilege to utter; even now he ought to be satisfied, because he knows that Providence orders everything for the best.'

Hospitality was quietly exercised in that family, to whom in fifteen days came four messages telling of deaths, not to speak of the father's arrest and the ignominious execution which awaited him. The next day Higginson was to take away the mother, who hoped to see her husband once more, and the young women hastily made the necessary preparations. They sat round the table sewing. He was shown the daguerreotype of a young man — one who was little more than a boy —

Oliver, who was killed at Harper's Ferry. His widow, a fair girl of sixteen, worked with the others, and her hand did not tremble at the spinning-wheel, nor did a muscle of her face move. And there was neither hardness nor pride nor hope of glory; these were foreign to the household of Brown. It would be difficult to understand such a state of mind elsewhere than in a Puritan country. Referring to them, Higginson quoted the words Carlyle spoke to a Frenchman to whom he was explaining the persecution borne by the Scotch Covenanters:—

'Those poor persecuted people, they made their appeal. . . .'

'Yes,' interrupted the Frenchman, 'they appealed to posterity, no doubt.'

'Not a bit of it,' quoth Carlyle, 'they appealed to the Eternal God!'

The Browns are of the same stamp. They never even thought of asking Higginson, who was the first stranger who had come near them since the blow had fallen: 'What do people say? or what do people think?'

One single question.

'Do you think that the cause of liberty will lose or gain by his death?'

Principles were the most general subject of conversation.

The Browns believed all their friends at Harper's Ferry to be invincible, on the ground that they were all people of 'principles' who tried to live rightly. They were entirely free from any spirit of revenge or of anger. Higginson read the papers to them which he had brought. These gave an account of the trial, with the simple evidence of the accused, straightforward, and oftentimes proud.

For example, this reply was given to the judge who asked:

'Were you sent out under the auspices of the Emigration Aid Society?'

'No, sir, I was sent out by John Brown.'

Theirs was the enthusiasm of children who exclaim, as they recognise their father's voice, 'It is really he!'

History has recorded many striking expressions of faith and devotion which touched even the enemies of the accused man. To his family it was nothing new or unexpected; he always spoke thus.

Recollections pour forth to overflowing. There are the books which he read—his portrait, and the letters that he wrote to his sixteen year old daughter Annie, the eve of his defeat, recommending her before all else to become a humble, fervent and sincere Christian, and afterwards to learn methodical habits. Here we see the real old Puritan throughout.

The youngest little daughter of five brought her own treasure, a Bible, upon the flyleaf of which the father whom she hardly knew, for he had worked in Kansas since her birth, had written good counsels in large firm characters.

Brown attended the Presbyterian Church, although he deplored that the minister did not curse slavery more often. For the most part he

detested set phrases and speeches, being convinced that questions should be dealt with direct and theories applied practically.

It was acting on this principle that at the last moment he ignored his friends, the best friends at Boston, and on his own responsibility took the arsenal.

His family seconded him to the best of their ability, denying themselves even to the extremest poverty in order to give everything to 'the Cause.' One of John Brown's last concerns was to send his wife fifteen dollars to pay his subscriptions; there was hardly a halfpenny of money in the house, except a little reserved for postage stamps.

Mrs Brown learnt the fatal sentence the following day from a newspaper when she was on her journey. She showed no signs of weakness, but bowed her head for some time, saying, when she raised it: 'I have had thirteen children, and only four are left, but if I am to see the ruin of

my house, I cannot but hope that Providence may bring out of it some benefit for the poor slaves.' She had good reason to hope; two years afterwards her husband's name resounded again and again in the battle-song of the soldiers of the Union, as they marched to victory across those same mountain passes.

John Brown refused to see his wife; he was afraid of breaking down. His last act when going to the gallows was to kiss a little slave, as if to promise him the deliverance of his race.

The execution of John Brown, and the publication of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' set fire to the powder which had been accumulating for so long, and which only waited for the spark.

IV

FROM his childhood, Wentworth Higginson had been adventurous; nothing fascinated him more than a good conflagration. Now, no conflagration was grander than the war in which he plunged soul and body, with almost boyish high spirits, in spite of his thirty-eight years.

It might have been said that the spirit of his friend John Brown had entered into him, for since 1862 he gave up regretfully the rank acquired in a perfectly drilled regiment, the 51st Volunteers of Massachusetts, to take command of the first coloured regiment. We now reach the most glorious period of Colonel Higginson's life and work. His book, 'Army Life in a Black Regiment,' was translated into French more than fifteen years ago by Madame de Gasparin. It was

a journal written hour by hour so to speak, the daily history of a fruitful experience, which consisted in the conversion of the slaves of yesterday into soldiers. This pioneer regiment was bound in honour to serve for four years; many others were formed later, and close upon 200,000 coloured men followed afterwards in the steps that the 1st Volunteers of South Carolina had carved.

Colonel Higginson perceived that the problem of the future of the race went forth to meet its solution under the baptism of fire.

He tried to do what is rarely done —to make his actions conform with his principles, braving the criticism and the raillery of those even who served the same cause that he did, for his own part caring very little for the results of a daring enterprise, so long as he could establish singular cases of courage among the blacks, for nothing had yet sufficiently demonstrated to him their persevering energy.

It did not matter; he went ahead, sustained by the thought that when a cause is right, evil always ends by going down before good.

And nothing was more interesting than to watch the gradual progress of these big children turned by two months of military discipline into musket-bearing men.

It was true that a burning faith upheld them: the best stimulant and also the best moral safeguard.

Take the following humble petition, one of the brief prayers uttered aloud in the camp:—

'Let me lib wid de musket in one hand an' de Bible in de oder, dat if I die at de muzzle ob de musket, die in de water, die on de land, I may know I hab de bressed Jesus in my hand an' hab no fear.'

Indeed, what would they have to regret in this world if death came. And again:—

'I hab lef' my wife in de land o' bondage; my little ones dey say ebry night, "Whar is my father?" But,

when I die, when de bressed mornin' rises, when I shall stan' in de glory, wid one foot on de water an' one foot on de land, den, O Lord, I shall see my wife an' my little chil'en once more.'

The chaplain declared himself converted by them, and they boldly styled themselves the Christian Army.

There were very few cases of desertion, Higginson assures us, never any of revolt. They showed a stoical indifference to all privations (the worst, to their thinking, was going without tobacco). They were invariably cheerful, and drunkenness was most rare; it is true that the officers set the example of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks and that not a drop of whisky ever entered the camp.

Their greatest fear was of being taken prisoners, for they knew that any black who shouldered arms was condemned beforehand to be hung like a felon. The officers, too, who accepted their leadership, were warned that they would share the same fate. All fought, as it were, with a rope round

their necks, and the negroes were very proud at heart of this equality in the matter of the promised ignominious punishment.

A general, when asked for his opinion on the question, replied: 'They are human—intensely human.'

And fine traits are not missing to prove that black humanity, although less highly developed than the white, is not any more despicable.

They would stand on sentry all night, shot through the shoulder, fearing to be put down on the sick list; another, whose lung was shot through, only pronounced one word, 'Is the Cunnel (Colonel) all right.' And a third, mortally hit, spoke of the fight whilst having his wounds dressed (negroes are all great talkers), declaring in his own way, that he preferred liberty to life.

Notable, too, was the self-control of the valiant Corporal Robert Sutton, before his former owner, a Southern plantation lady, who drew herself up before him and said:

'He—he is called Bob!'

And Bob, as though reduced to his former rank, merely said, with a military salute, just as though addressing his colonel:

'Will you see the slaves' dungeon? I have the key.'

In cases of dangerous expeditions it was often necessary to send out volunteers, but they were never far to seek; they were skilled scouts, they knew the ground, and they were quick in all kinds of different service and knew how to set about things in a clever and rapid manner.

Higginson does not make them out to be saints; he recalls that he was harassed in camp by demands for leave for which the same reason was always given: 'To go and see my wife.' To his great surprise, one of them who had the oftenest asked leave, and came again with the same request, said, 'I want to get married, *Cunnel.*'

And he discovered that a man could have two or three wives, or more, scattered over several plantations, but

the same conjugal tie held for each. These 'scattered wives' had the same married privileges as the first, and any other connection was considered as a pernicious legacy from 'the time of the masters.'

The absence of hatred towards their masters, even those who had ill-treated them the worst, was very touching; they only detested the slavery. And they showed pride on occasion; for instance, when after the war they declined the shamefully small pay offered them by the politicians of Congress, they replied, 'We gave ourselves to the government.'

It was an odd thing that as soon as they were captured, these men immediately returned to their slave ways, were superstitious and servile; but it was imperative that they should be free, or that steps should be taken towards that end.

The daring movement of Sherman towards the sea decided, Colonel Higginson tells us, the downfall of the Confederation, and Port-Royal

became the objective of the general, the negro troops occupying the country.

After due praise is given to the man who conducted that famous march, the next place of honour belongs to the regiment which, having forced the door, held it open for the victor.

V

THESE two years of the military life of Wentworth Higginson were fine; but the consequences of a wound obliged him to leave the service. He remained at Newport, owing to the delicate health of his wife, and he has given a most charming description of it in 'Oldport Days.' He returned to his books with delight, translated Epictetus, who was also a slave; Petrarch's Sonnets, the poems of Rückert and of Camoens, and poured forth essays on every question which inspired his thoughts during the course of events.

One, entitled 'Saints and their Bodies,' had no small share in spreading the use of athletic exercises in his country. Physical vigour and spiritual perfection seemed to him quite com-

patible; and he never lost an opportunity of comparing sports favourably with a certain type of asceticism which disapproved of them.

There is not much to be said for his attempts at novel-writing, although 'The Monarch of Dreams' was a curious work. It is the story of a man who, after having tried to guide his dreams and to call them up at will, is in the end overwhelmed by them, so to speak, and so caught in their irresistible meshes, as to become almost incapable of action. This tale was the result of dangerous experiments which the author made with opium after he had read 'The Confessions' of De Quincey while he was studying theology at the university.

The object was, it appears, to stimulate his imagination. He was not successful, to judge by 'Malbone,' wherein the most unlikely events, though true (so the author assures us), are accumulated around a most unpleasant character, suggested, it might be thought, by the unhappily

depraved heroes of Eugène Sue. Higginson admits, however, to have recognised and fallen a victim to his hero's extraordinary beauty and marvellous intellectual gifts, but it is of small importance that the sketch was taken from life if we do not feel that it lives.

On the other hand, his portraits of contemporaries are interesting for their faithfulness to detail. Even when he tells us nothing fresh about them he gives us the impression of entering into a closer intimacy, and shows us them, as he himself knew them, as neighbours and friends.

It is true we already knew what Emerson had done towards educating the public spirit of his time, in establishing original, direct and familiar intercourse between man and the universe, creating a poetry and a philosophy of intuition. The saying, 'Build therefore your own world,'* long ago echoed through Europe. But we know very little of Emerson's

* 'Contemporaries,' p. 10.

faulty criticisms, of his horror of French standards of correctness, of his prejudices against the great romance writer Hawthorne, or of his astounding paradox on Shelley. 'Though uniformly a poetic mind, he is never a poet.'

Emerson himself was more of a poet than a philosopher; 'his mission was to sit, like Socrates, beneath the plane-trees, and offer profound and beautiful aphorisms, without even the vague thread of the Socratic method to tie them together.'

The absence of system and the integrity of nature explain the fraternal bond between that transcendant being —'a pure bred Brahmin,' as Emerson has been called—and Alcott, once a colporteur, later head of a colony of Socialists, then of a summer school of philosophy.

I saw the trivial remains of that Concord School; it was like a rustic pavilion; there had been in it, as Higginson happily remarked, plenty of summer, a few shreds of philo-

sophy, and very little school. At the same time he gave full justice to the untiring activity of this well-meaning Alcott, who was too ready to be enthusiastic over everything that seemed original, no matter whether true or false. He was generally introduced to strangers as the American Plato, and Higginson adopts a tone of raillery towards his assumption of the pose of a choice spirit and treats him without ceremony as 'an innocent charlatan.'

Whittier, 'the popular poet-laureate of America,' is shown to us a shy and deaf man, a thorough bachelor, a Quaker, from the cut of his clothes to the custom of saying thee and thou. He was permeated with the noble spirituality bequeathed by the companions of William Penn to their descendants; firmly attached to the soil, he ever found fresh inspiration without travelling abroad. He sang of liberty before all else, but also of the already legendary past of his New England native land, where materials for

poetry are no more wanting than they are in Scotland herself.

On Walt Whitman, Higginson is severe, although he thinks the accusation of priapism brought against him by the chaste Emerson is too scathing. 'One would doubtless,' he says, 'never class him among those intoxicated with the divine nectar, but he certainly drinks to his heart's content two strong potions, himself and his country.'

The Colonel is offended by the fact that this complaisant giant, whom he thought at first sight would be a splendid soldier, knew war only through the ambulances, and had extolled the rolling of the drums without ever having responded personally to them. And, again, the author of 'Democratic Vistas,' the friend of the working-man and extoller of the labouring classes, has deified work without having ever really done any work. He sets out to be rough and wild, but is at bottom really the least simple and artless of the American poets—a dandy!

Is there not, in fact, great affectation in the constant use of foreign expressions, which are so often inaptly introduced into his verses?

Whitman's great popularity has extended beyond his own country; above all places to England, where his works were expurgated on their first appearance, 'in such a way as to show them decently clothed and in his right mind.'

All of us who have praised the genius of Walt Whitman cannot, being foreigners, explain his artificialities. For the rest, Higginson does not refuse —that would be impossible—to ascribe to him some of the highest poetical attributes, penetrating sight, prompt sympathy, a vigorous touch, superabundant imagination, a varied fertility, almost like that of Victor Hugo, with 'the same wide indolently vague desires after the welfare of the human race,' but without Hugo's power of construction or his dramatic instinct, or his gift of condensation.

Higginson has inscribed upon a broken column the long forgotten merits of

that delightful flute-player Sidney Lanier, who halted half-way between poetry and music. He shows us the method of working and the family life of the taciturn and yet genial Hawthorne. And they are not only literary men in this gallery of contemporary men and women: Helen Jackson, poetess and novelist, the friend of the Indians, whose rights she defended; Lydia Maria Child, that brave woman, who begged as a favour to be allowed to look after John Brown in his prison when he was wounded and condemned to death.

From the remarkable study on General Grant I select the following passages, which point out how much the military spirit differs on the two sides of the Atlantic:—

'So much stronger is the republican instinct among us than any professional feeling . . . that Grant, though trained to the pursuit of arms, never looked at things for a moment merely from the soldier's point of view. This was the key to his military successes—the time,

the place, the combatants being what they were—and this was the key to the readiness with which, at last, both Grant and the soldiers under him laid down their arms. Here at last, Europe thought, was the crisis of danger; here was the "man on horseback" so often prophesied as the final instrument of Providence, surely destined to bring this turbulent republic back among the mass of nations that obey with ease. The moment of fancied peril came; and it turned out that old Israel Putnam, galloping in his shirt-sleeves to the battle of Bunker Hill, was not more harmless to the liberties of America than this later man-on-horseback, Grant.

'The claims of Grant to permanent fame lie first in the fact that he commanded the largest civilised armies the world ever saw; secondly, that with these armies he saved the integrity of the American nation; thirdly, that he did all this by measures of his own initiating, rarely calling a council of war, and commonly differing from it

when called; fourthly, that he did all this for duty, not glory, and in the spirit of a citizen, not the military spirit, persisting to the last that he was, as he told Bismarck, more of a farmer than a soldier; then again, that when tested by the severest personal griefs and losses in the decline of life, he showed the same strong qualities still; and, finally, that in writing his own memoirs, he was simple as regards himself, candid towards opponents, and thus bequeathed to the world a book better worth reading than any military autobiography since Cæsar's Commentaries.'

We see, as we follow the course of Higginson's travels, that he brings as much perspicacity in his criticism of his foreign contemporaries as in the appreciation of his compatriots.

VI

A TYPICAL American is always supposed to have travelled, although numberless tasks keep him more often at home. Higginson, then, twice visited England and France, in 1872 and 1878. They were long-delayed pilgrimages. He was forty-eight years old when he first came to the land of his forefathers. He already felt acquainted with it, for he had met many English people at Cambridge.

He did not consider the most highly-bred and well-mannered of them superior to certain gentlemen of Boston, Philadelphia, or Virginia; and he kept the same opinion after seeing them in their own country; whilst, on the other hand, he declared that the Latin race often produces, even in the lowest grades of society, types

of refinement not to be exactly found in the Saxon race.

Numbers of people from all parts flocked to Newport, and sovereigns amongst them, the Emperor of Brazil, and his wife, a Bourbon.

'When I paused to recall what that name had signified through centuries of despotism and gloom, it was startling to think that I was sitting on the same sofa chatting peacefully with one of its last representatives.'

Here the Huron (as Voltaire understood it) showed the tips of his ear. There was often an *ingénu* at the house of Wentworth Higginson, and more often still a provincial.

I am well aware that he freely boasts of this provincialism under the pretext that American provincialism (a local patriotism) has no sort of connection with that which exists in small French towns, imaginary Tarascons, wherein the lawyer, the doctor, and sundry genteel people, give themselves up to gossip and domino-parties. An American provincial town of the

same class is no larger, perhaps, but it has already its schools and its public library—and aspires to a museum and to a conservatoire. To confuse these two extremes would be like confusing the childishness of the new-born child with that of the old man—the one reflecting every hope to come, and the other complete decrepitude. Ah well! With due deference to Mr Higginson, he exhibits the provincialism of Tarascon, as much as anyone else, where, at the outset of his impressions on 'Literary London,' he writes: 'My first duty on arrival was to ascertain my proper position as an American, and to know what was thought of us.'

Nearly all his opinions are based, indeed, on what such and such a person thinks of Americans. Tennyson fears them; he finds them aggressive. Higginson represents him in an unsympathetic and slightly ridiculous light, with an affected negligence of dress, his beard giving him the air of a Corsican bandit, clinging tenaciously to the most

unmitigated flattery, and believing the chief trait in a man's character to be whether he did or did not like Tennyson's poems. Carlyle interested him on the question of colour, as also Darwin, who, in addition, thought highly of Mark Twain's humour. The traveller then renders full and complete justice to both those fine minds.

Rossetti's house, where Walt Whitman, and even Joaquin Miller, were in favour, was to him the pleasantest in London. Matthew Arnold, on the other hand, is treated with contempt because he denied the existence of an American press distinct from the English press, and had dared to criticise Emerson's grand figure.

Higginson is evidently piqued by the ignorance shown by many English women on every American subject. That ignorance certainly borders on impertinence when one of them asks if Americans always address a new arrival in their country as 'Stranger.' Another exclaims, 'But you do not mean that you really like being an

American, do you? . . . I never thought of such a thing; I supposed that you were all Americans because you couldn't help it.'

At the house of the historian Froude, his wife and his sister-in-law could not believe their eyes when Higginson was introduced to them as the American visitor. 'They doubtless expected,' he said, a smile playing on his lips, 'to see me come forth on the warpath, tomahawk in hand.' Notwithstanding, Americans provided with letters of introduction are well received; it is simply a matter of regret not to find more local colour about some of them; just as American books give greater pleasure when they present themselves after the fashion of a clown who turns a somersault, in which no further merit is asked than that of the unexpected. Behold Cooper's Indian, Mrs Stowe's negro, Bret Harte's gambler, and Whitman's porter! Their success can almost rival that of Buffalo Bill!

In the face of such narrowness, it

seems really absurd to take the judgments of a foreign nation as though they were those of a kind of contemporary posterity. America has, however, this great fault; but Higginson, for his part, is not at all disposed to bow down before any one: he knew Emerson, Hawthorne, and Parker! He recalls with bitter feeling England's injustice towards her old colony, reproaching her for so long tolerating slavery, and then blaming her for having abolished it. Those wrongs in some respects did good; they *decolonised* the United States more and more.

One of the pleasantest memories which Higginson has retained of his stay in England seems to have been that of seeing Cardinal Manning at a meeting concerning prison discipline.

'A man whose whole bearing made him, as my friend Moncure Conway said, "the very evolution of an ecclesiastic." Even the shape of his head showed the development of his

function; he had the noble brow and thin ascetic jaw, from which everything not belonging to the upper realms of thought and action seemed to have been visibly pared away; his mouth had singular mobility; his voice was in the last degree winning and persuasive; his tones had nothing in them specifically English, but might have been those of a highly cultivated American, or Frenchman, or Italian, or even German. I felt as if I had for the first time met a man of the world, in the highest sense—and even of all worlds. . . . His convictions were wholly large and humane, and he urged them with a gentle and controlling courtesy that disarmed opposition. In reading his memoirs, long after, I recognised the limitations which came from such a temperament and breeding; but all his wonderful career of influence in England existed by implication in that one speech at the Prison Congress. If I were looking for reasons in favour of the Roman Catholic Church, its

strongest argument, in my opinion, would be its power to develop and promote to high office one such man. The individual who stands next to him in my personal experience, and perhaps even as his superior, is a French priest I once met by chance in one of the great continental cathedrals, and whose very name I do not know; but who impressed and charmed me so profoundly by his face, manner, and voice, it has seemed to me ever since that if I waked up to find myself betrayed into a great crime, I should wish to cross the ocean to confess it to him.'

The Queen also produced a great effect on Higginson. He saw her at a review of 16,000 men at Aldershot, and recognised true majesty in her bearing when the soldiers presented arms and shouted 'God save the Queen.'

'She is short, stout, with a rather heavy, and not altogether a pleasing face; but in spite of all this, she has a dignity of bearing which amounts

almost to grace . . . and it is certain that the present sovereign will hold her prerogatives, such as they are, with a firm hand. I never find myself quite such a ruthless republican anywhere else as in England — and yet there is a certain historic interest and satisfaction, after the long subordination of women, in thinking that the leading monarchy of the world still takes its orders from a woman's hand. It has rarely happened in history that a single sovereign, by the mere prolongation of a peaceful reign, has so influenced human history, as has been the case with Queen Victoria.'

These thoughts are strange reading now. But in 1878 even the Radicals believed that the strong personal influence of the Queen would not decrease. Considering the actual state of public opinion, Higginson tells us that the throne of England is admirably suited to a woman.

He should have added that wherever queens have reigned in this difficult century—perhaps even on account of

the difficulty—they have been surrounded by a chivalrous devotion, the respect naturally due to a woman, mingled with that which the Sovereign demands. Perhaps the system of monarchy is destined to flourish again, strengthened by some feminine attribute which shall symbolise the all-powerful weakness. The tears shed by the whole nation at the death of the aged Queen Victoria, and the enthusiasm, just as widespread, which was roused by the marriage of the young Queen of Holland, strengthen the supposition. In 1878, when Higginson asked an officer of high rank if England would ever become a Republic, he replied that it would be impossible during the Queen's life. But after . . . if a certain grandson of the Queen, who carries out pronounced theories of absolutism, had too much influence over his cousin, England would kick against such management, and between two evils would much prefer a republic, although in theory she does not want it.

That was the only hope left for the republican Higginson. He relates, with a spice of malice, that at this review at Aldershot, the pulley meant to hoist the British flags to float in the wind above the Queen's pavilion declined to work. 'There was at the time* quite a general impression that war with Russia was impending; and the more songs one sang about "the meteor flag of England," the more awkward it certainly was to have the meteor go down instead of up. A somewhat similar mishap occurred when the flag of the ill-fated Charles I. was first raised at Nottingham in 1642.' As to the review, no more striking uniforms or finer horses could be wished than those of the 16,000 beardless and well-fed boys, but they seemed a little as though they were playing at being soldiers; that, at least, was the opinion of the colonel of the First South Carolina Regiment, who declared that a single company of

* May 13th, 1878.

bronzed and tattered soldiers, such as he had known in the dark blue uniform, a less blatant one than this scarlet, had impressed him very differently. The spectacle was faultless, but it lacked moral interest.

The Boer War lends a certain value to these notes, which date back more than twenty years.

Of those which he took in Paris I content myself with quoting, without comment, the scanty fragments which follow:

At the theatre of the Folies-Marigny, on the centenary of Voltaire:—

'It was my first experience of French public oratory; and while I was aware of the resources of the language, and the sympathetic power of the race, I was not prepared to see these so superbly conspicuous in public meetings. The ordinary appreciation of eloquence among the French seemed pitched in the key of the greatest enthusiasm, with the difference that their applause was given to the form as well as to the substance, and was

given with the hands only, never with the feet. Even in its aspect the audience was the most remarkable I ever saw; the platform and the five galleries were filled almost wholly with men, and these of a singularly thoughtful and distinguished bearing — an assembly certainly superior to Parliament or Congress in its look of intellect. A very few were in the blouse of the ouvrier, and there was all over the house an amount of talking that sounded like vehement quarrelling, though it was merely good-natured chatter.'

Victor Hugo entered in a storm of applause; he seated himself beneath the garlanded bust of Voltaire, and M. Spuller began his oration. M. Spuller is a fine man, with somewhat of an English air; one of his hands rested on the table, the other performed the duty of two, or even of a dozen, after the manner of his race. Each of his phrases were punctuated with bravos and expressions of approval, with the 'Hear, Hear,' which indicates a profound literary enjoyment.

The enthusiasm grew still warmer when M. Emile Deschanel, with whose book on Aristophanes Mr Higginson was acquainted, set up a parallel between the career of Victor Hugo and that of Voltaire; he approached the latter rather dangerous subject with tact. 'La Pucelle' is, without question, a reprehensible book; but, at any rate, Voltaire admits that Joan of Arc saved France, and the priests who did such wrong to the heroine (for, in fact, were not they her executioners?) have really nothing to say against him. Of the speech of Victor Hugo, Higginson gives, so to speak, only the pantomime.

The orator stood behind two six-branched candelabra, and read without glasses from enormous sheets with very big writing on them; he made many gesticulations, and in moments of excitement he waved his arms over his head, his fingers spread out and trembling.

Sometimes he struck his head as though about to tear his white hair,

which would not have seemed too melodramatic. His voice was vigorous, but some defect in pronunciation hindered him from being heard so well as the others (Louis Blanc was the French orator whom Higginson heard the best, and Charles Blanc the least).

'The most striking part of Hugo's address, to my mind, was his defence of the smile of Voltaire, and his turning of the enthusiasm for the pending Exposition into an appeal for international peace. Never was there a more powerful picture than his sketch of "that terrific International Exposition called a field of battle."'

There was no music at the close of the gathering, which surprised the stranger. He was present at the triumphant departure of Hugo. 'It was Ascension Day, and occasionally one met groups of little white-robed girls, who were still being trained, perhaps, to shudder at the very name of Voltaire, or even of Victor Hugo.'

At dinner Louis Blanc told him in-

teresting anecdotes about the Revolution of 1848. He declared that he had never believed in the national factories; they had been put into his hand by a rival who wished harm to them and to him. Very merry and even facetious at their first meeting, Louis Blanc showed quite a different side on another occasion. He said sadly that France was only a Republic in name, that she has monarchical institutions and traditions, with a constitution well fitted to retain them in perpetuity. Louis Blanc did not consider Lamartine a very great man; he thought even that Lamartine did harm to the Republic by his deference to the middle classes. The story of the substitution of the tri-coloured flag for the red flag is absurd; for the red flag did not symbolise anything sanguinary, but, on the contrary, order and unity. It was the old oriflamme—the standard of Joan of Arc.

'After dinner M. Talandier played for us on the piano the "Marseillaise," which is always thrilling, and then the

"Carmagnole," which is as formidable and dolorous as the guillotine itself. It was strange, in view of this beautiful city, constantly made more beautiful by opening new great avenues. . . . Through the open windows we heard the music from a student's dance-garden below, and could catch a glimpse of young girls, dressed modestly enough, and of their partners, dancing with that wonderful grace and agility which is possible only to young Frenchmen.'

At the Chamber Higginson was seated amongst members of the Diplomatic Corps. He noticed several deputies writing letters, but did not see any newspapers. There was quite as much noise as is heard at Congress in Washington, except that there was no clapping of hands to call for the attendants. When the members get excited, it is like being in a den of lions. The president rings, and order is established; if he puts his hat on, the sitting is suspended. A storm was provoked by General Borel, a stout, red-

faced man, always half drunk, the Radicals declared, who kept his arms folded, ready, they said, for a *coup d'état*. One can see at the first glance how much wider the differences are between parties in France than in America; they even openly have reference to the very existence of the Republic.

There are no women in the Chamber, not even as spectators, though they could very well manage to be concealed somewhere. Higginson is surprised to find French women much less informed in political matters and on things in general than men.

He was asked by a woman, who served him with a basin of 'bouillon bourgeois' for twenty-five centimes in a restaurant, if they talked German in America, whilst her husband knew the history of Christopher Columbus, though he wore a blouse.

But I will stop here without following Mr Higginson to the *fête* given in honour of Jean-Jacques, at the American Circus, or to the banquet given at

Belleville to celebrate the taking of the Bastille, at which General de Wimpffen received a hearty ovation. They were apparently very pleased to see him, for since the Commune the French army has always taken the Conservative side.

Enough has been given above, it seems to me, to acquaint the reader with the inaccuracy of the opinions of the New World with regard to ourselves. Probably our own criticisms on them often leave much to be desired, but why blame us for the mistake Voltaire made in scouting Shakespeare, when Racine is not in the least appreciated in Anglo-Saxon countries? Why point out in Larousse's dictionary a slip which prints Emerton for Emerson, and changes Lowell into Biglow, under the pretext that he is the author of the 'Biglow Papers,' when in other places distinguished writers whom I will not name (Higginson is not among the number) transform La Bruyère into Bruyère, La Rochefoucauld into Rochefoucauld; some one decking

out Edgar Quinet with a particle, which another denies to Mme. de Pompadour.

What could more readily be pointed out, in considering with Higginson the 'Cosmopolitan level in the Equation of Fame,' is the too great eagerness which our reviews and papers show to discover and cry up foreign authors, often, perhaps, inferior to some French writers whose names are left unnoticed by the critics. We show an excessive infatuation for productions not our own, but it is surely not the foreigner, it seems to me, who should complain of this.

He should remember, on the other side, that in the midst of many superficial and even erroneous opinions, Philarète Chasles was the first to rouse a lively interest in the diverse literatures of the two hemispheres as they were between 1830 and 1848. And since then what a number of imitators there have been!—surpassed first and foremost by Emile Montégut, to whom America owes, without attaching

sufficient value to it, the introduction into France, and the appreciation there, of Emerson, Longfellow, and the untranslatable Hawthorne! Would to heaven that French authors could find such acute critics outside their own borders! The work of the author of the 'Blithedale Romance' never met with such a high degree of deep and intimate understanding, even in his own country.

After this Mr Higginson is at liberty to reply to us as once did a Litchfield (Connecticut) senator to the English ambassador who praised the beauty of an American lady, saying that she would be admired at St James's.

'Sir, she is admired even in Litchfield.'

But that would be somewhat of a provincialism, and not of the best.

VII

PUTTING aside literary criticism, Colonel Higginson is in sympathy with France, and he holds it in still greater esteem since the *feministe* movement set in vigorously, for the emancipation of women is, after the emancipation of slaves, the subject he has most at heart.

The essays which compose the volume entitled 'Women and the Alphabet began to appear in 1859, and they certainly did not hinder the triumph of the many rights that the Americans have secured during the course of forty years.

It is claimed on behalf of the first of these essays, 'Ought women to learn the Alphabet?' that it determined the foundation of the famous Smith College. This essay had been suggested

to Higginson by an amusing pamphlet which appeared in Paris in 1801, 'Plan for a Law prohibiting the Alphabet to Women.' Under a paradoxical guise this little French *brochure* probed to the very heart of the problem. It is simply this:—Ought women to be allowed the right to learn their letters? Yes? Very well! in that case they should learn everything else; they can only be either dependent upon men or upon an equality with them, there is no middle course. The Chinese are much more logical than we are; they decree that for men virtue consists in cultivating knowledge, but that it is a virtue in women to renounce it. In fact, nature has defined pretty clearly the limits proper to each sex; let legal and conventional difficulties be removed once for all; they prevent women from finding out for themselves the exact point where they ought to stop.

Maternity, that sanctuary closed to men, means a certain moral and physical sensitiveness in women. It is not weakness, since they exercise

unwonted strength in certain instances, but it is a sensitiveness which shows itself throughout every woman's career, and is as a ransom price paid for the divine joys which she alone tastes. But how many other qualities have the two sexes in common besides, and Higginson maintains that there is not any one moral quality belonging to the one which cannot do honour to the other.

From their infancy, boys and girls have need of the help each can give the other; and mixed education is a useful stimulant to the one and an invaluable restraint upon the other. The objection urged against the system, that men ought to be all brain, and women all heart, is one of the falsest and most dangerous imaginable. Let us have faith in the pure and religious-minded woman; there is no danger of her becoming *unsexed* whilst she is under the eye of God: allow her to vote, just as she is allowed to speak at a public meeting, or to teach geometry and Latin

in a mixed school; the best preparation for liberty is liberty. Her education will be formed by the very rights which shall be given to her; she will carry commonsense, accuracy, intelligence, and the talent for organisation which she shows in the management of a household, into that new *rôle* which the thirty years' campaign for Women's Suffrage has prepared her, a campaign waged in the United States by women of the highest type, aided by many eminent men, who hold that the experiment of forming a model republic would be more likely to succeed if one half of the race were not debarred from taking part in its government.

Higginson hopes that the moral tendencies of women will be victorious in the great causes of temperance and peace; at the same time he does not plead excuses, nor claim for his client the rights of citizenship because she is an angel; it is enough for him that she is a human being. He has

never ceased to plead the cause of women. He made himself their advocate at every epoch in history; the Fronde interested him because it was a woman's war—of ladies, for whom his admiration even surpassed in warmth that of Cousin; the campaigns of La Grande Mademoiselle are described by him as golden threads in the sumptuous tapestry of scarlet and purple, which represents the age of Louis XIV. He unhesitatingly reinstates Sappho and her school of learning, which Voltaire's ill tongue tried to depict as a school of vice, comparing this needlessly calumniated school to the classes opened in Boston for young girls by Margaret Fuller. The Greek goddesses,

'Sublime visions of an ideal womanhood,'

were fervently worshipped by him, and he gives room amongst them for the metamorphosed Demeter, and the Virgin Mother, with that condescension of the benevolent heretic which he always reveals when he speaks of

anything connected with Catholicism. With what enthusiasm he defends those learned women, from Elena Cornaro to Mme. Dacier, against Molière's sarcasms! With the examples of George Sand and George Eliot, Rachel and la Ristori, he proves that woman has already overtaken man in the two intellectual departments of novel-writing and dramatic art; and *à propos* of them he refers to Darwin to prove that superior merit belongs to her who enters upon the stage last. It is not a question of knowing if woman is man's equal in the first stage of the struggle for existence, but if she is not likely to overtake him. In his country, women like Lydia Maria Child, Lucy Stone, Louisa Alcott, Lucretia Mott, and Julia Ward Howe had in him both friend and ally. Nevertheless, he projects several discreet jokes at the worthy Mrs Beecher Stowe; the radical is a man of the world, and a great appreciator of beauty besides, whilst this illustrious reformer was evidently

wanting in grace and ease, and negligent of life's little details.

Culture for women plays the part of an Americanism of the first rank, which with Higginson we cannot praise sufficiently, though we may condemn sometimes when it produces an extreme susceptibility. The best Americanism consists in believing that *national self-government* is not a chimera, and that it will be established by degrees in that country of wide sky, a sky so high above the earth, with the zenith so far distant, and all the spectacles of a glorious atmosphere which strike the eye of the newly-arrived traveller, and which should be symbolically typical. It is not sufficient to have such a vast sky if the soul has not also a wide outlook.

The American has other aspirations than had his insular ancestors. Emerson truly said the Englishman is of all people the man who keeps the most firmly on his feet; but that kind of obstinate immobility does not constitute a man's whole object; when he makes a step in advance, adds

Emerson, he becomes an American. For the latter the peril is, on the contrary, a too great power of assimilation, which borrows some characteristic from every man he meets, losing in return some property peculiarly his own.

He ought to learn to use his own eyes, instead of being content with the classical glasses of Europe, and he should give longer time to concentrate himself, to feel the value of perfect moulding, and, above all, he must moderate his excessive activity.

Higginson should apply to himself the last advice, which he gives to others; no one is more enterprising or versatile than he. We have seen him in the pulpit, leading battles, writing in the chief magazines of his day; he also took active interest in public schools and libraries, commanded the general staff of a governor, was naval and military historian, delegate to a host of conventions, political and others, and, at last, a member of Congress.

The needs of a formative epoch

wanted him, he pleaded. Every citizen would do as much; there was nothing exceptional in it. No American, whatever his profession might be, would refuse public service.

I question, however, if there are many who, in more than half a century, could count hardly five years during which they had not worked for their state or town, sometimes for both, at the same time. Wentworth Higginson is, besides, one of the most versatile of lecturers. He soon enlisted in long tours, *lyceum courses*, which carried to the people, even in the far West, the benefits of intellectual development. I should remark that these took place in the past rather than now, for the multiplicity of papers and theatrical enterprises have nearly put an end to this system, which had at one time a considerable vogue. Higginson tells amusing anecdotes of the meetings organised in the least civilised parts of the States, with the help of balls, and acting, or simply by business advertisement, to make

them go. It was very funny to see Emerson's name coupled with that of a dancer, or Shakespeare's assisting to cry up such and such goods. Advertisement, trade and literature went hand in hand in aiding one another. Higginson took the highest tone, it goes without saying, and intended only the moral and social and political education of his audience. The question of money troubled him little. He was satisfied with that simple ease of circumstance which allowed his pen to run on whatever subject attracted him. Speech, which alone procures the incomparable advantage of meeting the public face to face, seemed to him a kind of relaxation, and to these conditions of happiness he added the inestimable privilege of inexhaustible hopefulness.

'Up to the last,' he said, 'the worker in social reforms has compensations that are unknown to others. When he has seen the fulfilment of many things that had been long declared impossible, he has faith in the accom-

plishment of the rest. For instance, I want to live to see the foundation of International Arbitration assured; the complete reform of the Civil Service; the establishment of Free Trade; equality of the sexes in education and in the eye of the law; the transfer of certain monopolies held by the few into the hands of the people; the triumph of religious liberty and of temperance; and, finally, the complete freedom of American literature from the trammels of colonial superstition which has hitherto prevented its progress.'

He did not labour under any illusions; for many long years to come, America will be in bondage to Europe; for yet a longer number of years she will go there to find, as did Robinson Crusoe on his shipwrecked voyage, that which she needs for her existence; but the shipwrecked voyage would have been long since effaced from men's memories if it had not happened to Robinson. Be yourself; rely on your character.

'Be bold! This will be the last word that Thomas Wentworth Higginson will utter to the country whose judgment he has endeavoured all his life to direct and enlighten.

There should not be any rest, either in this world or in the other, until the shadow of England, which always weighs so heavily on America, is at last lifted. Emancipation will then be complete, and the reformer may sleep in peace, whispering, perhaps, to himself at length, we may guess, the supreme counsel given by the old poet, Spenser, to his Britomart. When she entered the enchanted palace, Britomart found inscribed over four successive doors: '*Be bolde, be bolde, and everywhere be bolde.*' Over the fifth alone she read: '*Be not too bolde.*'

A useful warning, said Wentworth Higginson, but secondary, and inferior to the other.

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